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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000797

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PMIL](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#)  
SUBJECT: LACK OF CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP AS TRANSITION  
DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE

REF: A. CONAKRY 0787  
[1](#)B. CONAKRY 0788  
[1](#)C. CONAKRY 0793

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY. Certain segments of the youth population appear to be the only civilian sector currently engaging the military putschists, but coup leaders may be becoming increasingly disinclined to facilitate an immediate transition to civilian rule. The international community is demanding a return to civilian rule, but Guinean civil leaders are going to need to start playing a more visible role in order to achieve this objective. To date, they do not seem to be doing so. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (S) In response to the December 23 coup (reftels), civilians appear to be adopting a wait and see approach, essentially waiting for the dust to settle before formulating their reaction. Part of this strategy may be due to the population's general distrust of the military, and an underlying fear of violence. In the past, many civilian contacts have indicated that they fully expected the military to step in after the president's death, but that a civilian transitional government would need to be an immediate next step. Violence perpetrated by security forces during the 2007 strike and the 2008 military mutiny, as well as the general increase in banditry by uniformed personnel, has made citizens increasingly wary of its military.

[1](#)3. (S) The only civilian sector that appears to be currently engaging with the putschists is the youth, and even that group seems to be limited in its support base. Poloff spoke at length with Thierno Balde, the youth liaison with the putschists, on December 23. Thierno has been increasingly frustrated in his dealings with the military over the past few months. He told Poloff that the youths are insisting on a civilian transition, but that it is becoming more and more difficult to advance that agenda. Poloff emphasized that the US Government is looking for a peaceful, democratic transition led by civilians. Thierno agreed, saying he and the youths completely agreed and that they are relaying this message to the putschists. However, Thierno said that there is growing resistance among the putschists to civilian leadership.

[1](#)4. (S) Thierno's latest plan, as of 19:00 yesterday, was to establish a transitional council that included a civilian prime minister as the head of government. Thierno said that there would also be a president, to be filled by a military officer, and three vice presidents in order to allow all four ethnic groups to be equally represented. He emphasized that the leadership should be decided by unanimous consensus. During the course of the discussion, it became clear that the proposed council would only have two civilian members. Poloff questioned how such a council could be considered

civilian since it would be predominantly controlled by the military. Thierno said that the new PM would be exclusively in control of elections, and that nobody on the council would be able to run as a candidate.

15. (U) Poloff commented that whatever institution is created must clearly demonstrate the Guinean Government's commitment to civilian rule and elections in the near-term. She pointed out that legislative elections are already on track for May 2009 and that the Council should adhere to this schedule in order to advance the democratic process. Thierno countered by saying that legislative and presidential elections should be held concurrently.

16. (SBU) Less than an hour after the conversation, the putschists announced the creation of a predominantly military council with problematic membership (septel), indicating that Thierno probably did not even have an opportunity to present his latest proposal.

17. (S) Thierno telephoned Poloff again on December 24 saying that he and the putschists were in the process of negotiating an acceptable solution, but he did not indicate whether he had been successful in pushing the civilian agenda. Poloff asked whether the youths had been reaching out to other civil sectors such as opposition political parties and the unions in order to begin building broader civilian pressure. Thierno dismissed the idea, saying that the opposition political parties are supporting the constitutional process and the succession of the President of the National Assembly, Aboubacar Sompore. Thierno emphasized that the discussion is currently only between the youth and the military. Poloff

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encouraged him to reach out beyond the youths.

18. (U) The National Council of Civil Society Organizations is reportedly planning to meet today to discuss the coup, but it is unclear what their reaction might be.

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COMMENT  
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19. (S) Available information suggests that although the 19th promotion was behind the coup, other opportunist military elements appear to have joined the initiative in order to take advantage of Conte's death. These elements may have gained the upper hand and it is unclear whether the 19th promotion and the youth will be able to recover control. The civilians have a critical role to play, but as of yet, their reaction has been relatively quiet. The international community can continue to stress the importance of civilian control, but the civilians themselves have to step up and demand it as well. Embassy will continue to reach out to civilian leaders and express support for a civilian controlled democratic process. END COMMENT.  
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